

Testimony of Marilyn Mackay at SB #1051 Hearing
March 9, 2015

In 2004 when my name was submitted by North Stonington's Democratic Town Committee to serve as their Registrar of Voters, I found several dichotomies:

Why is a political party submitting my name to serve in a non-partisan position?

Does one cater to the DTC in order to continue being supported as a candidate at the possible expense of being partisan in the operation of one's duties?

To whom do I report? The bills are paid by the Town BUT the rules are set by the Secretary of the State's office.

Who has decision-making powers regarding issues on which the two Registrars disagree?

My skills were more than adequate for the position but at no time did anyone ask for my credentials nor have I ever seen a list of requirements.

Having previously been a poll worker in the state of New York and in the U.S. Virgin Islands I have no memory of such a laissez faire, rule-less universe.

As it turns out, Connecticut is the only state in the country to have two partisan, locally elected officials. In many states, county boards of elections hire non-partisan professional staff to run elections. The position is essentially administrative requiring the ability to communicate orally and in writing, to be self-organized, to manage poll workers, a deputy, assistants and the voting public and to know the laws governing elections and to stay on top of changes.

The job varies greatly from a town like North Stonington with one polling place and +/- 3,700 registered voters to a city like Hartford with +/-48,694 registered voters and 24 polling places.

Between election periods we have little to do and once online and Election Day Registration procedures are better organized, there will be even less.

Fortunately, my counterpart and I divided our responsibilities based on skills and interests with no conflict. We shared a desk, all files, made joint decisions and seldom experienced friction BUT that is not the case in a number of other towns or cities. The buck has to stop somewhere, and where there is divisiveness - whether partisan or personality - neither person is in charge and there is no one to step in to remedy the conflict with resulting inefficiencies and conflict.

With increasing technology and computerization, there is no need for each town/city to elect Registrars - let alone two of them - and the suggested changes in SB #1051 will certainly streamline the process and eliminate friction and confusion. Training should be clearly delineated for registrars, moderators and poll workers on a systematic, scheduled basis.

The argument that two sets of eyes are better than one might then be used for electing two governors, two treasurers, etc. It makes no sense except that this has been the norm in Connecticut and there is a comfort zone in sharing responsibilities - which is difficult to give up.

In conclusion, it appears the SOTS's upcoming budget is planned to be reduced. If that office is expected to take on additional responsibilities, it will require higher revenue amounts to function appropriately - certainly not less.

At the moment the SOTS's computer system has gone down just about every time all of the towns/cities use it simultaneously. Such a scenario must change **prior** to their taking on the additional responsibilities cited.

The goals set forth in Bill SB #1051 are admirable and, with time, will become that much more necessary. However, the job should not begin until the SOTS's office is in a position to handle its increased load fiscally, administratively and technologically.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Marilyn', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

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